

## Education of colored children

EDUCATION OF COLORED CHILDREN.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SAVANNAH AND THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK, RELATIVE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOLS FOR THE COLORED CHILDREN In the City and County.

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1872.

### TO THE PUBLIC.

As much misapprehension exists in relation to the efforts of the Board of Education to secure the Beach Institute building for the purpose of establishing there a Free Public School for the colored children of the city of Savannah and county of Chatham, it has been deemed expedient and proper to publish the subjoined history of the whole affair, and the correspondence held in relation to it with the American Missionary Association.

By authority of the Board.

Respectfully, R. D. Arnold, President.

The following report was submitted to the Board of Education on the 9th inst., and was received and ordered to be spread on the minutes:

The committee, to whom was referred the subject of the education of the colored children of the city of Savannah, as will more fully appear by the minutes of the Board of the 8th of July ult., beg leave to report that the Chairman addressed the following letter to two prominent colored citizens of this city:

Savannah, August 14, 1872.

*To Mr. Wm. Cleghorn and Mr. Wm. Pollard:*

Sirs: I respectfully invite you to meet a committee of the Board of Education for the city of Savannah and county of Chatham to-morrow evening at 8 o'clock, to take into consideration the subject of providing schools for colored children in the city and county.

You are also requested to bring with you such other persons as you may deem advisable, to join in the conference, as it will be advisory, and the Board would like to be fully informed as to the wishes of the representative colored people of the city, and wish to carry into effect as soon as practicable so desirable an object as the organization of schools for colored children in the city and county.

The meeting will be held at the eastern end of the Chatham Academy, at the office of the Board.

Very respectfully yours, R. D. Arnold, President B. E. C. S. and C. C.

On the 15th of August the meeting was held at the office of the Board. Present, Dr. Porter, J. Lama, Col. Anderson, and the President.

The committee of colored citizens were Wm. J. Cleghorn, Simon J. Mirault, Albert Jackson, Chas. E. Middleton, Alexander Harris, Louis B. Toomer, Wm. Pollard.

The conference between the committee of the Board and the committee of our colored fellow-citizens was mutually satisfactory.

Col. Anderson moved that a committee from the colored representatives present, to be selected by themselves, be appointed to inquire upon what terms and conditions the Board of Education can obtain possession of the Beach Institute for the purpose of education of the colored children in the city.

It was moved that the committee consist of five.

They selected Albert Jackson, Wm. Pollard, Alexander Harris, Robert Carter, Chas. E. Middleton.

The meeting then adjourned.

On the 29th Mr. Wm. Pollard called on the Chairman, and submitted to his inspection the following correspondence:

Savannah, August 20, 1872.

*Rev. E. M. Cravath, Secretary of the American Missionary Association:*

Dear Sir: The undersigned, together with a number of other colored citizens, appreciating the kindness of your Association in its effort to educate our youth, and being desirous of relieving it of the heavy expense it has undergone, and feeling that it is just on the part of the State that it should establish schools, have presented a petition to the City Council, setting forth that a large number of colored children were not attending school in consequence of there being no free schools, and asking that such schools be established. The petition was referred to the Council Committee on Education, and by them referred to the County Board of Education. The Board appointed a committee to confer with the petitioners, when the matter was talked over, and the Board expressed their willingness to educate colored youth upon the same terms that white children are educated. At present there are no school-houses available except Beach Institute, and we have been requested by the Board of Education to confer with the Association, and ask if that building can be obtained, and upon what terms, &c. We pray that the building be granted to us upon as liberal terms as possible, in order that the Board might be encouraged to extend the work as wide as it may be found necessary. We have confidence in the proposition made by the Board. We send by this mail the sixth annual report of the Public Schools, and direct your attention to certain portions of the same, to wit: On page 8 reference is made to the liberality of the Chatham Academy, which, we learn, has been given to the Board for ninety-nine years, for the nominal sum of one dollar per year; on page 15 you will find the plan of the Catholic schools, and the terms upon which the school-houses have been granted; page 39, rules and regulations; 43, qualifications of teachers, and matters of interest throughout the pamphlet.

Hoping that our communication will receive your immediate attention, we are very respectfully and obediently yours,

William Pollard.

Chas. E. Middleton.

Robert Carter.

Alexander Harris.

Albert Jackson.

The following answer was received:

Rev. E. N. Kirk, D. D., President.

Wm. E. Whiteny, Assistant Treasurer.

Rev. E. L. Cravath, Field Secretary.

Secretaries.

Rev. Geo. Whipple,

Rev. M. E. Struby,

4

New York, August 26, 1872.

*American Missionary Association, 59 Reade Street:*

Gentlemen: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 20th instant. The sixth annual report of the Public Schools has not yet come to hand. I send you herewith the copy of a letter written to Hon. John Screven, Mayor of Savannah, on July 20, relative to the subject presented in your favor now before me. You will see from this letter to the Mayor that more than a month since we made a definite proposition to the school authorities, by which Beach Institute can be made a free school, and the colored people relieved from the paying of tuition. The basis of co-operation which we propose is the same which has been adopted in many of the Southern States. You will note that the building is tendered free of rent. We are glad that you, as representative colored citizens of Savannah, are interested with us in securing free Public Schools, and we are sure our proposition will be heartily seconded by you.

Very truly, yours, E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary, A. M. A.

To Wm. Pollard, Charles E. Middleton, Robert Carter, Alexander Harris, Albert Jackson, Savannah, Georgia.

The Chairman, after this interview, called on the Mayor, who had just returned from Atlanta after a continued absence there of six weeks on important matters connected with the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad. He then referred the Chairman to the letter addressed to him by Mr. Cravath, stating that his absence and a press of business had prevented his earlier action on the subject. The following is a copy of the letter:

A. M. A., 59 Reade St., N. Y., July 20, 1872.

*Hon. John Screven, Mayor, Savannah, Ga.:*

Dear Sir: For several years a school for colored children has been maintained in the city of Savannah, known as Beach Institute, by the American Missionary Association. You are doubtless familiar with the work which this school has been doing, and know something of the reputation of the school among the colored people of the city. In order to support the school, it has been necessary to throw a part of the expense upon the colored people in the shape of a small tuition fee paid monthly. For many reasons, it seems desirable that the school should be a free public school. I have the honor to make the following proposition through you to the proper school authorities of the city: That if they will employ Mr. A. N. Niles, the Superintendent, and his corps of teachers, at such salaries as are paid to other teachers in the city schools, and make Beach Institute a free public school, we will grant the use of the building and school furniture and apparatus without rent for the coming year. The increasing interest in the establishment of free public schools, so general in the South, and especially in many cities of Georgia, encourage me to hope for favorable action on this proposition.

Very truly, yours, E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary.

After a second interview with Mr. Wm. Pollard, he said his Committee thought matters might be expedited if the Chairman would write to Mr. Cravath so as to obtain a reply before the next meeting of the Board.

The Chairman then wrote the following letter to the Rev. E. M. Cravath:

Savannah, August 30, 1872.

Dear Sir —Col. Screven, Mayor of our city, has just referred to me a letter of yours to him dated the 20th ult. In explanation of the delay in referring it to me as the President of the Board of Education for the city of Savannah and county of Chatham, I would state that Col. Screven has been absent at Atlanta on important business connected with the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, and returned home only day before yesterday.

It has always been the desire of the Board to take under their superintendence the education of the colored children, but they have never been able to command the funds. The Board was chartered for the city and county alone, but the charter was so drawn that when the State system should be put into operation, the Board should still remain in power, and control any funds due the county for educational purposes. The income from the State Railroad was by law set apart for this purpose, and there was a sum of money amounting to more than two hundred thousand dollars in the State Treasury belonging to the educational fund. You must of course be aware of the robbery by the

carpet-bag State Government of all the proceeds of the road, and in addition, Bullock's Legislature quietly appropriated the cash for their per diem. We are now relieved from the oppression of that government, and are looking forward with hope.

On the 14th of August I, as President, addressed an invitation to Mr. Wm. Cleghorn and William Pollard to meet a committee of the Board of Education for the city of Savannah and county of Chatham to-morrow evening (15th), at eight o'clock, to take into consideration the subject of "Providing Schools for Colored Children in the City and County." They were requested to bring with them any other of their colored fellow-citizens as they might deem advisable. A very satisfactory conference was held, and a committee (to be selected by and from the colored persons present) was appointed "to enquire upon what terms and conditions the Board of Education can obtain possession of the Beach Institute for the purpose of educating colored children in the city." This committee (W. Pollard, Charles E. Middleton, Robert Carter, Alexander Harris and Albert Jackson) did address you on the 20th. They have submitted your reply to my consideration. In that reply you refer them to your letter of the 20th of July to Mayor Screven for your terms and conditions, which are in the following words:

"I have the honor to submit the following proposition through you to the proper school authorities of the city: That if they will employ Mr. A. N. Niles, the Superintendent, and his corps of teachers at such salaries as are paid to other teachers in the city schools, and make the Beach Institute a free public school, we will grant the use of the building and school furniture, and apparatus without rent for the coming year."

There will be no meeting of the Board until the 8th proximo. Many of them, also, are absent from the city just now. I will lay your letter to Mayor Screven before them at their next meeting. But, as I wish to expedite matters as much as possible, I assume the responsibility of adding a few words:

The rules of the Board are definite, that no teacher shall be appointed by them unless he or she shall have undergone a satisfactory examination before a committee of the Board, appointed for that purpose. When appointed, each teacher is held to be under the control of and subordinate to the Board for his or her conduct as a teacher. Of course the general conduct of every teacher comes under the same category. We have but one Superintendent for all the schools in the city and county. We have principals for the various divisions, Girl's High School, Boy's High School, Grammar School, &c.

We would, of course, require a Principal for any school to be located at the Beach Institute, for colored children, *celeris paribus*. I risk nothing in saying that the Board would not hesitate to give the preference to those whom you might recommend for teachers. But they must submit to the same

examination as others, and must expect to be entirely under the superintendence and control of the Board. We expect to give the same salaries as to other teachers, proportionate to the duties required, and the grade of studies. I will send a copy of our last report to you. You will there see how we have utilized the Chatham Academy building. We could make the Beach Institute valuable to its benevolent founders and useful to our colored children and to their parents. I will address you again after our next meeting. Perhaps you may find it convenient to make some suggestions prior to the meeting.

Respectfully yours, R. D. Arnold, President B. E. C. S. and C. C.

To Rev. E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary American Missionary Association, 59 Reade street, New York.

To this the Chairman has received the following reply:

American Missionary Association, No. 59 Reade Street, New York, September 2, 1872.

*Dr. R. D. Arnold, President Board of Education, Savannah, Ga.:*

Dear Sir —Your favor of the 30th ult. is at hand. The rules of the Board, to which you refer, are as I supposed them to be, and my proposition for the adoption of Beach Institute by the School Board was made in view of them. If the teachers nominated by us cannot pass the usual examination, we should not expect them to be elected. We shall expect the teachers to come under the same regulations as the teachers of other schools. Mr. Niles would of course be Principal of Beach Institute instead of Superintendent, as under our organization. Beach Institute, we are assured, has secured the confidence and approval of the colored people of Savannah. We shall hope that if adopted by the city and made a free public school, a greater number will be able to avail themselves of its advantages, and thus its usefulness be increased. It will be necessary for us to reserve the right to use the building for the accommodation of the church, of which Rev. Robert Carter is Pastor, or for other purposes not inconsistent with the use of the building for the public school.

Very truly yours, E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary.

A committee was then appointed with full power to draw up terms and conditions to be submitted to the American Missionary Association, which having been done, they were transmitted to Rev. E. M. Cravath as follows:

The President addressed the following to Mr. Cravath:

Savannah, September 14, 1872.

Dear Sir —Your letter of the 2d instant came duly to hand, and was submitted to the Board of Education at its monthly meeting on the 9th.

The following terms were agreed upon, to be offered to your association:

The Board of Education will agree to take the building known as the Beach Institute, its school furniture and apparatus, for *five* years, without rent, and to apply the same to the free education of the colored children of the city of Savannah and county of Chatham, between the ages of eight and eighteen years, on the following terms and conditions, to wit:

1st. The building and its appurtenances, its teachers, pupils, etc., to be under the sole control and management of the Board of Education, as in the case of the public schools and schools houses now under their direction.

2d. The teachers and principal to be selected by the Board alone, and not *nominated*, as intimated in the communication received from the American Missionary Association.

3d. Mr. Niles, the present principal, to be retained in that capacity, provided he comes up to the requirements of the position, and affords satisfaction to the Board; but the position to be open to any competitor who may be superior to him in fitness for the place.

4th. The salaries of teachers appointed by the Board to correspond with those of similar grade in the public schools, but the number employed to be within the discretion of the Board. In other words, the Board will not bind itself to take the *whole corps* of teachers now in Beach Institute, even if they should come up to the standard of requirement, but reserves to itself the right to divide the appointments with applicants in our own midst who may prove meritorious and deserving. Savannah, having to foot the expenses of tuition, etc., involved in the education of the children, should have a representation in the instruction of the same.

5th. The Board will not object to the use of the Beach Institute building for religious services on the *Sabbath Day*, under the auspices of the Rev. Robert Carter, or any other reliable person, provided, always that said religious services are not to interfere with the regular system of tuition involved in the school hours of the pupils, on occasions other than the Sabbath day. When used for "other purposes" than those immediately above named, the sanction of the Board of Education must first be obtained, as in the case of other school buildings now under their charge.



6th. The Board, under the foregoing arrangement, will agree to educate the colored children of the city of Savannah, under the same rules and regulations as are now or may hereafter become applicable for the instruction of the white children of the city, to the extent of the capacity of the Beach Institute in its accommodation of pupils.

The Board, during its control of the Beach Institute, will keep the building under proper repair and insurance.

Yours, very respectfully, R. D. Arnold, President B. E. C. S. and C. C.

Subsequent to this the following letter was received from the Rev. E. M. Cravath, which was submitted to the Board at a special meeting held on the 26th instant:

6

American Missionary Association, No. 59 Reade st., New York, Sept. 18, 1872.

*R. D. Arnold, President Board of Education, &c., Savannah, Ga.:*

Dear Sir —Your favor of the 14th inst., is just at hand. I regret being under the necessity of respectfully declining the terms and conditions proposed by the School Board relative to Beach Institute.

In consideration of the educational work that has been done in the city of Savannah by the American Missionary Association, and the fact that we offered to the school authorities a building and a corps of teachers, under whom a high reputation had been secured for the Institution, we regard the terms submitted in my former communication as reasonable and liberal. We are also fully convinced that to accept the terms proposed by the Board would not be for the best interests of education among the colored people, even were we at liberty to annul our arrangements with the teachers secured for the coming year.

We shall assume that the city of Savannah will provide in other ways for the establishment of free schools, and shall endeavor to so conduct Beach Institute that it shall in no way be antagonistic to the public schools, but simply supplement the good work which we hope the public schools will accomplish.

Very truly yours, E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary.

The following reply was sent:

Savannah, September 26, 1872.

*To the Rev. E. M. Cravath, Field Secretary of the American Missionary Society, No. 59 Reade street, New York:*

Dear Sir —Your letter of the 15th inst. came duly to hand, and was submitted to the Board at a special session held to-day. In it you decline peremptorily the terms and conditions proposed by the School Board, relative to Beach Institute.

Under present circumstances, I feel it due to the Board of Education not to pass this letter over in silence, so that matters pertaining to this negotiation may not be hereafter subjected to misunderstanding.

It must be borne in mind, that the consultation with a committee of our colored fellow-citizens was held when the Board had no knowledge of your letter to Mayor Screven relative to the Beach Institute. That committee, William Pollard and others, addressed you on the 20th of August, stating the willingness of the Board "to educate colored children upon the same terms that white children are educated," and asking upon what terms your school building could be obtained for educational purposes for colored children. In your reply of the 26th of August, you referred them to a letter of yours, to Mayor Screven, of the 20th July. Upon the return of Mayor Screven from Atlanta, he referred that letter to me as President, and on the 30th August I wrote to you on the subject, telling you that "the rules of the Board are definite; that no teacher shall be appointed by them unless he or she shall have undergone a satisfactory examination before a committee of the Board appointed for that purpose; when appointed, each teacher is held to be under the control of and subordinate to the Board, for his or her conduct as a teacher. Of course, the general conduct of every teacher comes under the same category."

From this it is plain that the Board could not receive Mr. Niles and his corps of teachers at your mere will and pleasure, in violation of their own rules.

On the 2d September you answered that letter, saying:

"The rules of the Board, to which you refer, are as I supposed them to be, and my proposition for the adoption of Beach Institute by the School Board, was made in view of them. If the teachers nominated by us cannot pass the usual examination, we should not expect them to be elected. We shall expect the teachers to come under the same regulations as the teachers of other schools."

This letter, with this explicit language as to the subordination of the teachers to the Board, both as to their mode of election and as to their conduct, was laid before the Board at their meeting on the 9th inst., and terms and conditions were agreed upon by them, a true copy of which I forwarded to you on the 14th inst.

I have no fault to find with your rejection of these terms, as that is your undoubted right; but I do object to certain expressions in your letter of the 18th, containing that rejection, as inconsistent with our views expressed to you in my letter of the 30th ult., and approved of by you in your letter of the 2d, as to our power and intention to select teachers according to our established rules. In your letter of the 18th, you say:

"In consideration of the educational work that has been done in the city of Savannah by the American Missionary Association, and the fact that we offered to the school authorities a building and a corps of teachers under whom a high reputation had been secured for the Institution, we regard the terms submitted in my former communication as reasonable and liberal." You further speak of your "arrangements with the teachers *secured for the coming year.*" Now, in my letter of the 30th August, I told you that the teachers must be selected by the Board themselves, according to their rules. In your letter of the 2d inst. you acquiesce in this. In no communication of yours did you state that "arrangements" had been made with your teachers "for the coming year."

It would have been farcical for us to have pretended to examine a "corps of teachers," already cut and dried, to our hands.

Had you apprised us of your "*arrangements,*" we would have stopped all negotiation with you, as we certainly would never have submitted to such dictations, ignoring alike our powers and our capacity to select for ourselves.

My letter of the 30th August must have shown to you that we intended to select for ourselves, and you had then a proper opportunity for closing the negotiation on your part.

Respectfully yours, R. D. Arnold,

President of the Board of Education for the City of Savannah and County of Chatham.